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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGO](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DPM ISSAWI ON NINEWA MEDIATION EFFORT

Classified By: A/DCM Gary A. Grappo for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a meeting with POL M/C and MG Lanza on December 28, DPM Rafi al-Issawi said that for "well-known" political reasons he strongly doubted that further progress could be made before national elections in March to reconcile the feuding (Sunni) al-Hadba Gathering (AHG) and (Kurdish) Ninewa Fraternal League (NFL) members of Ninewa's Provincial Council. (Note: The NFL won a third of the seats in the January 2009 Provincial Council (PC) elections; however, the AHG refused to allow NFL members to encumber any key provincial government positions, prompting the NFL to boycott the PC. Issawi's mediation effort focuses on ending the boycott, but also touches on broader Arab-Kurd reconciliation issues, security, the economy and judicial affairs. End note.) Citing recent conversations with Arab and Kurdish interlocutors in Ninewa, he advised against trying to end the NFL's boycott of the Ninewa PC in the near-term. In the run-up to elections, neither side could politically afford to be perceived to make the compromises necessary to end the impasse. Privately, Issawi said the parties were "cautiously optimistic" that reconciliation could occur, but after the election.

¶2. (C) Responding to the POL M/C's question on whether engagement by the Ambassador's Senior Advisor for Northern Iraq (SANI) or PRT Ninewa before the election could help end the boycott, Issawi advised that the U.S. instead focus more generally on engaging the parties, building trust and explaining the joint security architecture. He noted that he and MNF-I Odierno would travel to Mosul on December 30 to brief Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, the two deputy governors, the PC Chair and the commander of the Ninewa Operations Command on the joint security architecture. Issawi noted that the CG's earlier briefing to Sheikh Abdallah Humeid al-Yawer, acting paramount sheikh of the al-Shammar tribal confederation, helped allay Sheikh Abdallah's concerns, particularly that joint U.S.-peshmerga-Iraqi Army checkpoints would legitimize the presence of peshmerga forces in disputed internal boundary (DIBs) areas. Noting that senior Ninewa political figures do not regularly communicate with each other, he believed recapitulating the briefing for the governor and other officials would be useful.

¶3. (C) In addition, Issawi said he wanted to signal to the two sides that he was still involved and will follow up on other aspects of his Ninewa initiative. He intended to ask Governor al-Nujaifi for a list of detainees' names, which he had still not received. (Note: The issue of non-Kurds detained by Kurdish assayesh in the DIBs areas and then transferred to the KRG for detention has become a point of friction. End note.) Issawi will also follow up on the status of efforts to recruit 8,000 ethnically-mixed cadres and into the Iraqi Police and 6,000 into the Iraqi Army. Issawi also intended to follow up on reports that there had been complications in disbursing funds for projects funded out of a portion of Ninewa's FY 2006-2008 budget. (Note: For security reasons, Ninewa's FY 2006-2008 budget, totaling some

USD 500 million, was not disbursed and was returned to the
GOI. Issawi brokered an agreement to have a significant
portion of that amount returned to the province in the form
of project development funds. End note.)
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